



The Sorbonne ... in Abu Dhabi

Despite the tragedies and dangers that threaten the future of humanity, if not the universe, due to wars, conflicts of interest and selfishness, and the ignorance of evolutionary laws that are required to build peace and development for mankind, events occur from time to time that reinforce the optimism of those who believe in better tomorrows and prove that knowledge, which generates culture, is the very basis on which progress can be achieved. These events also demonstrate that relations between governments and nations, as long as they work towards this kind of progress, form a basis for legitimate and reciprocal interests between successive generations, open to culture, art and creation in every field.

The Emirate of Abu Dhabi, which presided over the Arab Gulf Federation at the time of the late lamented Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan and worked with the six other emirates to create the state of the United Arab Emirates, as well as its association with the other Gulf States to create the Gulf Cooperation Council, also actively participated as the State's capital in the League of Arab states before the UN and within all regional and international institutions. This exemplary emirate, in conjunction with sister and allied states, perseveres in its march towards a renewal in all fields, starting with those of education and culture, from primary school to university. In just a few decades, it has created national Arabic universities, then free universities, with the American University of Beirut and other American or western universities. Then came the time for this new event in higher education that can be qualified as worldwide and historic, that of the installation of a branch of the Université Paris-Sorbonne in Abu Dhabi, the inauguration of which will take place in October 2006.

This remarkable decision is no doubt the natural consequence of sound and excellent relations between the two capitals, Paris and Abu Dhabi, as well as between the two heads of state, President Jacques Chirac, and the Head of the State of United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed ... but the same logic that governs these relations also applies to the Crown Prince, Deputy Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Head of the local government of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed, who personally sponsored the project, guaranteeing both the material and moral bases for its success though the position adopted by the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, as well as his ardent desire to rapidly advance the project, a work of progress and civilization. In Paris, this role was played by His Highness, as well as by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdallah Bin Zayed, UAE Ambassador to France, and Seif Sultan Moubarak El-Aryani, UAE Ambassador to UNESCO. On the French side, we cite Professor Jean Robert Pitte, the President of the Université Paris-Sorbonne and the well known consultant in international relations, Pascal Renouard de Vallière, efficiently and solidly supported by Deputy Olivier Dassault, seeking to encourage everything that can reinforce scientific progress among peoples in light of his ambitious concept of public service and relations between France and the Arab world. Further to the official protocol ceremonies that took place with the signature of the project by the parties represented by the Minister of Higher Education, Sheikh Nahyan Bin Moubarak Al Nahyan and Gilles De Robien, along with the director of the Ministry in Abu Dhabi, Dr. Saïd Hamad Hussein, and Professor Pitte, the Sorbonne will launch its opening in Abu Dhabi with 200 students. This number will increase to 1,500 students from the various countries of the Middle East once the construction of all of the buildings is completed in which classes in archeology, history of art, geography, urban planning,

general history, information and communication, languages, and foreign literature and civilization classes will be held, as well as classes in classic and modern literature, music, philosophy and sociology. A rebirth for this venerable institution, 750 years after its creation in 1257!